

# Slow and Steady Equals Success!

Linda Wilson  
Department of Roads

I've always tried to follow a philosophy of moderation, eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, dairy and protein. I try to limit red meats, as well as excess fats and sweets and seldom drink sodas or other sweetened beverages. I don't eat out very often; when I do, I try to order salads or other low-calorie menu items. Rather than deprive myself of the things I enjoy, such as cookies and ice cream, I occasionally treat myself to small portions. This helps me avoid the temptation to binge at some point and feel guilty about it later.

Despite my efforts, I was having troubles losing those 'last 10 pounds'. As I tried to think of other ways to reduce my caloric intake, I analyzed my meal choices. I typically eat a light breakfast of a banana, orange juice and whole grain toast with peanut butter, and a light lunch of fruit and yogurt. For dinner, I noticed I had been eating more meals of red meats, potatoes or pasta, as well as some fried foods. Since my husband is a great cook and does a lot of the meal preparation, those are the meals he likes to prepare. I wanted to try to cut back on that, if possible.

We have compromised on this, including fish at least once or twice a week, as well as more chicken and lean cuts of pork. We have also eliminated the fatty sauces and gravies that accompanied some of these dishes. We make sure to include a vegetable and/or salad with the meal. Also, I have paid close attention to the "occasional" treat I mentioned earlier to make sure it stays manageable.

As far as exercise, I started gradually adding a routine that would accommodate my work schedule. I'm not a morning person, so that was out of the question. I knew I didn't want to exercise later in the evening, so the only option was to fit this in right after work. I also knew I didn't want the expense or pressure of going to a gym. Once I start something, I have pretty good self-discipline...It's just getting started that's the hard part.

I slowly began incorporating some of the exercises that I had learned in classes I had taken several years ago, including Pilates, yoga and Tai Chi. I added some basic stretches, crunches, planks, push-ups, etc., and started doing them three times a week, for about half an hour, right after work. Immediately following the exercise routine, I did a half-hour workout on the treadmill while watching my favorite television program. Then I did some more floor exercises and stretches as a cool down.

It took a while to adjust to this routine; I also had to be flexible, as there were occasional commitments after work that interfered with my schedule. But for the most part, once I got started, I stuck with it. It took several months to notice a difference; then I noticed the pounds were coming off, gradually. I was thrilled when I lost five pounds and kept it off! It took a few more months to lose additional pounds; then I had lost another five pounds! I had reached my goal! At this point, I was determined to maintain the weight loss. I had reached my goal; but I noticed that I was still losing weight! After my one-year goal was reached, I have lost almost 5 additional pounds... on top of the 10 pounds I set out to lose!

I really don't have any secret formulas, magic potions, or cure-alls for this. It's simply making up your mind to do something, then doing it. Moderation is the key! Use common sense in doing what feels right for you. Set a realistic goal and stick with it. Don't go overboard or try some fad diet or exercise scheme. Do an activity that you enjoy. Be patient with yourself; allow for occasional, unavoidable breaks from your schedule. Also, realize that it will take changes in **both** food intake and exercise to get results. If you want sustained weight loss, it is going to be a slow and steady process, but it will be worth it because you will have made a lifestyle change that will stay with you...and you will feel very good about yourself! I did it and so can you... It feels great!

